

**Testimony
Housing Committee
February 21, 2023
In support of HB 6588 and HB 6589.**

Mariano Rivera, CT Communist Party

Senator Moore, Representative Luxenberg and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Mariano Rivera. I was born and raised in Bridgeport and currently reside in the lower Naugatuck River Valley area where I am a member of the Valley Workers and Students Club and the Connecticut Communist Party.

I am testifying today in support of HB 6588 and HB 6589. As we see a troubling rise in homelessness, evictions and corporate landlords hoarding housing to increase their profits in our state, rent stabilization continues to be highly supported among working people.

Current vacancy rates in Connecticut remain very low, leaving renters and mobile home owners at a disadvantage in finding adequate and stable housing. We absolutely need more affordable rent supply in Connecticut. Rent caps and good cause eviction protections must be implemented as part of this goal. Workers who have not seen an increase in their wages need protections as they continue to find themselves powerless against corporate landlords who continue to raise rent costs without maintenance and improvements commensurate with the annual rise in costs.

The claim that rent stabilization negatively impacts housing quality is false. Maintenance has been an issue for renters even without any rent stabilization policies. Rent stabilization and good cause protections ensure tenants can request repairs without the threat of retaliation from landlords.

Corporate firms who are buying up property to increase their profits use their power to exploit renters and small homeowners alike. The often forgotten nearly 11,000 mobile home owners in Connecticut are facing unfair rent lot increases and oppressive lease modifications in this troubling trend of corporate firms purchasing mobile parks throughout the entire state. Mortgage financing requires mobile home wheels and tow assembly to be removed making it costly for residents to move their mobile homes in the event another affordable site is available to them.

Like many renters, mobile home owners are often those who live on fixed incomes, senior citizens and those on disability.

Homelessness is increasing in our state as eviction rates reach higher than pre pandemic averages. Towns with the largest populations of people of color like Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, and Waterbury are currently on the Princeton Evictions Lab top evicting cities in the US. The Connecticut Department of Education defines homelessness as “children and youth who lack a fixed, regular and adequate night time residence”, cites an expected 25% increase of students experiencing homelessness this school year, the highest rate of students without stable housing since 2017.

In my conversations with renters and mobile home owners in my community, I've learned that many are constantly worried about threats of displacement and overwhelmed with their struggle to maintain basic living standards. Many of my own disabled family members including my mother and uncles are constantly preoccupied with the struggle to survive on a fixed income that leaves them at a disadvantage in maintaining stable housing.

I highly encourage amendments to the bills to represent meaningful protections that meet renters' needs in this crisis. Rent increases should not be higher than 2.5% a year for lease renewals or new leases. Landlords should be required to prove good cause for evictions. And new construction should be included from completion.

As someone born and raised in Connecticut, our state should be a solid and stable place for folks to lay down roots in our communities. Housing is not only a business but a human right for all. This is why I strongly support strengthening HB 6588 and HB 6589, and encourage you to make bold and moral steps to ensure both bills protect the most vulnerable in our state. Thank You.

Sources:

Evictions:

<https://ctmirror.org/2022/12/11/ct-eviction-rate-children-effects/>

Low Vacancy Rates:

<https://www.ctpost.com/opinion/article/opinion-workforce-housing-essential-for-ct-17788453.php#:~:text=Connecticut%20is%20experiencing%20an%20unprecedented.rate%20of%20just%202%20percent.>

Homelessness

<https://ctmirror.org/2023/02/13/ct-students-experiencing-homelessness-could-increase/>